

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A multimedia hub comprising:
a chassis comprising at least one tower;
a microprocessor disposed in the chassis and running an operating system comprising a user interface;
at least one video display device disposed on the chassis and receiving display data from the operating system;
at least one input device disposed on the chassis and arranged for user input of data to the operating system; and
at least one marking-based output device to which a user can direct output.
2. The hub of claim 1 wherein the at least one tower stands on a floor and supports the at least one display device at substantially average adult human eye level.
3. The hub of claim 2 wherein the operating system displays advertisements on at least one display device during periods when the at least one display is not employed by a user.
4. The hub of claim 2 wherein the at least one tower includes at least one data port with which the hub can communicate with another device.
5. The hub of claim 4 wherein the at least one data port comprises a wireless networking port.
6. The hub of claim 4 wherein the at least one data port comprises a parallel interface port.

7. The hub of claim 4 wherein the at least one data port comprises a serial interface port.

8. The hub of claim 4 wherein the at least one data port comprises an Ethernet port.

9. The hub of claim 4 wherein the another device is a portable computer.

10. The hub of claim 4 wherein the another device is a personal digital assistant.

11. The hub of claim 4 wherein the another device is a storage device.

12. The hub of claim 1 wherein one of the at least one video display is a touch-sensitive display that is also one of the at least one input device.

13. The hub of claim 1 wherein the at least one input device comprises a keyboard.

14. The hub of claim 13 wherein the keyboard is a graphically-represented keyboard on a touch-sensitive display.

15. The hub of claim 13 wherein the keyboard is disposed on the chassis.

16. The hub of claim 2 wherein the at least one input device comprises a pointing device.

17. The hub of claim 16 wherein the pointing device is a track pad.

18. The hub of claim 16 wherein the pointing device is a touch-sensitive display.

19. The hub of claim 1 wherein the at least one input device is a speech recognition package.

20. The hub of claim 19 wherein the speech recognition package comprises a command and control package.

21. The hub of claim 19 wherein the speech recognition package comprises a speech-to-text package.

22. The hub of claim 1 wherein a first tower stands on a floor and supports a first video display device at substantially average adult human eye level, the device further comprising a second tower that stands on a floor with a height substantially equivalent to the first tower, and a second video display device extends between the first and second towers.

23. The hub of claim 22 further comprising a work surface extending between the two towers.

24. The hub of claim 22 further comprising a scanning interface arranged to accept an original object to be scanned to create an image of the original object.

25. The hub of claim 24 wherein the image is stored on a storage medium of the device.

26. The hub of claim 22 wherein at least one of the first and second towers houses the marking-based output device.

27. The hub of claim 26 wherein at least one of the first and second towers houses an output tray of the marking-based output device.

28. The hub of claim 1 wherein the marking-based output device is electroreprographic.

29. The hub of claim 1 wherein the marking-based output device is a phase-change ink jet device.

30. The hub of claim 1 wherein the marking-based output device is an ink jet printing device.

31. The hub of claim 22 wherein the second video display device is a water-vapor based display device.

32. The hub of claim 22 wherein the second video display device is a projection device.

33. The hub of claim 22 wherein the second video display device is a flat panel display.

34. The hub of claim 4 wherein the at least one data port includes a video input port.

35. The hub of claim 34 wherein the another device is a camera connected to the video input port.

36. The hub of claim 35 further comprising video conferencing software sending input from the camera and from an audio input port of the at least one input and receiving video data and audio data via a communications line connected to the hub, the received video data being shown on the at least one video display device and the audio data being played over an audio device connected to an audio output port of the at least one data port.

37. The hub of claim 11 wherein the storage device is an optical media drive.

38. The hub of claim 37 wherein the optical media drive is a read/write drive.

39. The hub of claim 19 wherein the speech recognition package provides control over the hub via spoken commands.

40. The hub of claim 19 wherein the speech recognition package provides navigation of a network to which the hub is attached via spoken commands.

41. The hub of claim 1 further comprising a payment acceptance device.

42. The hub of claim 41 wherein the payment acceptance device is a magnetic card reader with attendant card authorization software.

43. The hub of claim 41 wherein the payment acceptance device is a cash acceptor.

44. A multimedia hub comprising:

a chassis comprising two towers, a first tower and a second tower stand on a floor;

a video display device extending between the first and second towers;

a microprocessor disposed in the chassis and running an operating system comprising a user interface;

at least one video display device disposed on the chassis and receiving display data from the operating system;

at least one input device disposed on the chassis and arranged for user input of data to the operating system;

at least one data port with which the hub can communicate with another device; and

at least one marking-based output device to which a user can direct output.

45. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one data port comprises a networking port.

46. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one data port comprises a parallel interface port.

47. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one data port comprises a serial interface port.

48. The hub of claim 44 wherein the another device is a portable computer.

49. The hub of claim 44 wherein the another device is a personal digital assistant.

50. The hub of claim 44 wherein the another device is a storage device.

51. The hub of claim 50 wherein the storage device is an optical media drive.

52. The hub of claim 51 wherein the optical media drive is a read/write drive.

53. The hub of claim 44 wherein the video display device a touch-sensitive display that is also one of the at least one input device.

54. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one input device comprises a keyboard.

55. The hub of claim 54 wherein the keyboard is a graphically-represented keyboard on a touch-sensitive display.

56. The hub of claim 54 wherein the keyboard is disposed on the chassis.

57. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one input device comprises a pointing device.

58. The hub of claim 57 wherein the pointing device is a track pad.

59. The hub of claim 57 wherein the pointing device is a touch-sensitive display.

60. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one input device is a speech recognition package.

61. The hub of claim 60 wherein the speech recognition package provides control over the hub and applications running on the hub via spoken commands.

62. The hub of claim 60 wherein the speech recognition package provides navigation of a network to which the hub is attached via spoken commands.

63. The hub of claim 60 wherein the speech recognition package comprises a command and control package.

64. The hub of claim 60 wherein the speech recognition package comprises a speech-to-text package.

65. The hub of claim 44 further comprising a work surface extending between the two towers.

66. The hub of claim 44 further comprising a scanning interface arranged to accept an original object to be scanned to create an image of the original object.

67. The hub of claim 66 wherein the image is stored on a storage medium of the device.

68. The hub of claim 44 wherein at least one of the first and second towers houses the marking-based output device.

69. The hub of claim 68 wherein at least one of the first and second towers houses an output tray of the marking-based output device.

70. The hub of claim 44 wherein the video display device is a water-vapor based display device.

71. The hub of claim 44 wherein the video display device is a projection device.

72. The hub of claim 44 wherein the video display device is a flat panel display.

73. The hub of claim 44 wherein the at least one data port includes a video input port.

74. The hub of claim 73 wherein the another device is a camera connected to the video input port.

75. The hub of claim 74 further comprising video conferencing software sending input from the camera and from an audio input port of the at least one input and receiving video data and audio data via a communications line connected to the hub, the received video data being shown on the at least one video display device and the audio data being played over an audio device connected to an audio output port of the at least one data port.

76. The hub of claim 44 further comprising a payment acceptance device.

77. The hub of claim 76 wherein the payment acceptance device is a magnetic card reader with attendant card authorization software.

78. The hub of claim 76 wherein the payment acceptance device is a cash acceptor.

79. A multimedia hub comprising:

a chassis comprising two towers, a first tower and a second tower stand on a floor;

a work surface connected to at least one of the towers;

a microprocessor controller disposed in the chassis and running an operating system comprising a user interface;

at least one video display device disposed on the chassis and receiving display data from the operating system and comprising a video display device extending between the first and second towers;

at least one input device disposed on the chassis and arranged for user input of data to the operating system, the at least one input device comprising:

at least one keyboard; and

at least one pointing device;

at least one data port with which the hub can communicate with another device and comprising:

at least one data port comprises a networking port; and

at least one video input port;

a scanning interface arranged to accept an original object to be scanned to create an image of the original object; and

at least one marking-based output device housed in the chassis and to which a user can direct output.

80. The hub of claim 79 wherein the at least one data port comprises a parallel interface port.

81. The hub of claim 79 wherein the at least one data port comprises a serial interface port.

82. The hub of claim 79 wherein the another device is a portable computer.

83. The hub of claim 79 wherein the another device is a personal digital assistant.

84. The hub of claim 79 wherein the another device is a storage device.

85. The hub of claim 84 wherein the storage device is an optical media drive.

86. The hub of claim 85 wherein the optical media drive is a read/write drive.

87. The hub of claim 79 wherein the at least one video display device comprises a touch-sensitive display that is also one of the at least one input device.

88. The hub of claim 79 wherein at least one keyboard is a graphically-represented keyboard on a touch-sensitive display.

89. The hub of claim 79 wherein at least one keyboard is disposed on the chassis.

90. The hub of claim 79 wherein at least one pointing device is a track pad.

91. The hub of claim 79 wherein at least one pointing device is a touch-sensitive display.

92. The hub of claim 79 wherein the at least one input device comprises a speech recognition package.

93. The hub of claim 92 wherein the speech recognition package provides control over the hub and applications running on the hub via spoken commands.

94. The hub of claim 92 wherein the speech recognition package provides navigation of a network to which the hub is attached via spoken commands.

95. The hub of claim 92 wherein the speech recognition package comprises a command and control package.

96. The hub of claim 92 wherein the speech recognition package comprises a speech-to-text package.

97. The hub of claim 79 wherein at least one of the first and second towers houses at least one output tray of the marking-based output device.

98. The hub of claim 97 wherein the at least one output tray comprises a locking output tray.

99. The hub of claim 79 wherein the video display device is a water-vapor based display device.

100. The hub of claim 79 wherein the video display device is a projection device.

101. The hub of claim 79 wherein the video display device is a flat panel display.

102. The hub of claim 79 wherein the another device is a camera connected to the video input port.

103. The hub of claim 102 further comprising video conferencing software sending input from the camera and from an audio input port of the at least one input and receiving video data and audio data via a communications line connected to the hub, the received video data being shown on the at least one video display device and the audio data being played over an audio device connected to an audio output port of the at least one data port.

104. The hub of claim 79 further comprising a payment acceptance device.

105. The hub of claim 104 wherein the payment acceptance device is a magnetic card reader with attendant card authorization software.

106. The hub of claim 104 wherein the payment acceptance device is a cash acceptor.